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Senate Work Has Begun



It is hard to believe that I have been your U.S. Senator now for over 50 days. It has been an incredibly busy time with a number of important issues to handle. I appreciate the confidence you have

shown by entrusting me with this responsibility, and I will work hard to keep your trust.

This newsletter is designed to keep you informed of the important issues and votes taken up on Capitol Hill. Your input on those issues is certainly welcome. You can call or stop by my nearest regional office or send me an email message at <http://risch.senate.gov/email>.

Again, Vicki and I thank you for this opportunity to serve you and the citizens of the great state of Idaho.

First Senate Vote Protects Lands, Livelihoods

I cast my first vote as a U.S. Senator on Sunday, January 11 on S. 22. The bill was a collection of public land issues Congress had been working on for the past few years, including land use legislation for the Owyhee Canyonlands and other areas of Owyhee County.

The seeds of this legislation began in the closing months of the Clinton administration, when the Owyhee Canyonlands were being considered for monument status. Other land users were concerned that this designation would cut off vast areas to grazing, and restrict other uses.

While the monument designation was not accomplished, the Owyhee County Commissioners thought it best to control their own destiny, and convened a working group to attempt to resolve the use issues for the area.

Dubbed the Owyhee Initiative, this group of local citizens, conservation groups, recreationists, and tribes

worked to craft a proposal that would satisfy all concerned. When a draft was agreed to, the County Commissioners and the Shoshone Paiute Tribe asked Senator Crapo to move it through Congress. In 2004 he began the process of gathering support for the legislation and continued the collaborative process at that level.

It was my pleasure to support this legislation that was the result of a collaborative process. Compromises were made but the result is a bill that protects some outstanding landscapes and cultural areas, provides economic certainty for the many ranch families, and allows continued access for recreationists.

Senator Crapo deserves a great deal of credit for his long involvement and encouragement of collaboration in this difficult, but worthwhile, project.

Stimulus Package Activity





The so-called stimulus package is now law, despite my opposition. The 1,071 pages of legislation, pictured at left, came with a price tag of nearly \$800 billion and more than \$1 trillion with interest figured in.

My first speech on the Senate Floor addressed the legislation and why calling it a 'stimulus' is fraudulent. Simply put, this spending package does too little to stimulate our economy by quickly creating jobs, and places an enormous financial burden on our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

I did support a number of amendments, like tax credits for home purchases, in an attempt to do 'damage control' on the bill, but most of those were voted down.



I truly hope I am wrong and this bill gets our economy growing again, but history has shown us that giant government spending has never delivered that result.

Cabinet Nomination Votes	YES	NO
Secretary of Treasury Tim Geithner		
- could not overlook his past tax issues		
Attorney General Eric Holder		
- irreconcilable differences on Gun Rights		

Co-Sponsored Legislation

I have co-sponsored several bills that I believe are important. One that I think is critical to pass is S. 298, the Financial Markets Commission Act.

Modeled after the 9-11 Commission, this group will investigate the near collapse of our banking system and housing market. The seven-member bipartisan commission will have one year to investigate and the authority to refer evidence of criminal wrongdoing to the U.S. Attorney General and to a State Attorney General if necessary.

I truly believe that if evidence shows individuals or institutions were criminally negligent and caused or prolonged the near downfall of our system, restitution and time in prison is a good start for those convicted.

Committee Assignments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy and Natural Resources Committee • Committee on Foreign Relations • Select Committee on Ethics • Select Committee on Intelligence • Joint Economic Committee

Wolf Delisting Work Ahead

Idaho's attempt to have the gray wolf removed from the Endangered Species Act and managed by the state has been halted once again. Despite the filing of federal rules in December by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that would allow the states of Idaho and Montana to manage the wolf populations within their borders, the President halted the implementation of all rules pending a review by the new Administration. That is certainly within his purview to do, but a long delay is not in the best interest of the state.

Recently, Governor Otter, Senator Crapo, Congressmen Simpson and Minnick, and I co-signed a letter to the President asking him to move this rule along as quickly as possible. With Idaho's wolf population growing to eight times the recovery goals in Idaho, there is no good reason to not allow us to manage these wolves. We have a long and successful history in managing big game and other species and we can do it with wolves just as well.

Roadless Rule Hits Speed Bump

In 2006 when I served as your 31st Governor, I worked to resolve a serious issue involving the designation of 9.3 million acres of Idaho as roadless. Without any input from the state and local citizens in 2001 the Clinton administration placed a large chunk of Idaho off limits to multiple use.

Later, the state requested that public hearings be held in counties that had roadless areas, and citizens and interest groups provided input on the utilization of these lands.

In going through all of those comments, it became clear that a "one size fits all" approach to public lands did not work. The land users and people who lived near these lands understood that and made it clear there were important distinctions within some of these areas.

Using that input, I created five management themes for the roadless areas. They ranged from a near-wilderness designation down to a "general forest, rangeland and grassland" category of 406,000 acres that allows timber harvest and road building if it met NEPA requirements.

Despite the collaborative process, five national environmental groups filed suit in early January to block the Idaho Roadless Rule from being implemented.

It was very disappointing to me that a minority of groups who refused to participate in the process now wants only their voice to be heard on how these lands should be managed. The input given from a variety of wildland users helped me craft high levels of protection for some lands that truly deserved it, and provide for multiple use of other lands where it fit. This lawsuit is a disservice to the collaborative process and a step backward in resolving public land management conflicts.

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